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America Needs a 'Royal' Commission

An Intimate Message from Washington

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WASHINGTON. As the year 1952 comes to a close, another year in which the Communist question has been furiously before the American public, it becomes more and more apparent that a whole new approach is needed. What may be required is that the United States adopt the equivalent of one of Canada or Britain's royal commissions. A royal commission in those countries is one composed of as impartial, objective, and competent citizens as can be found to study a given problem and report with recommendations.

Consider the situation that has prevailed in the United States Government and the capital in the past two years.

One Senate committee, after exhaustive investigation and hearings, has found Owen Lattimore innocent of subversive activities. Another Senate committee has declared him "a conscious and articulate instrument" of the Soviets.

One loyalty committee, the State Department's, has found John Carter Vincent to be a reliable and responsible public official. Another, the Loyalty Review Board, has found there is "reasonable doubt" as to Mr. Vincent's loyalty and his service with the government is now suspended.

One radio commentator with a fairly wide audience recently has attacked at least six other columnists and commentators because they disagreed with him on the Lattimore case—attacked them not merely for disagreement on this issue but in a way to imply that since they are wrong about Lattimore they cannot be trusted about anything else.

When Senate committees disagree with Senate committees, private boards counter-act other private boards, and radio commentators attack each other, all over this Communist question, what is the public to believe? It is small wonder that the first question a Washington correspondent is asked when he ventures beyond the confines of the Potomac swamps is whether or not the Communists have taken over the government.

The counsel of calmer voices has not pre-

vailed. Not that this uproar is without some cause. But the detached appraisal of the situation has not overcome the emotional concern stirred by extremists on both sides. It has been this correspondent's experience, for instance, talking formally to groups in the Appalachian country, and informally to folks in Texas and Arizona, that what Gen. Bedell Smith said about Communists in the federal government not long ago has been pretty well lost, if it attracted any attention at all.

General Smith, as head of the Central Intelligence Agency, said that the government, working through his agency and with J. Edgar Hoover (whom General Eisenhower will reappoint) has for some time had the problem of subversives fully under control and that it is no longer serious. General Smith, who was Eisenhower's chief of staff during World War II, is not a man who uses words lightly.

The difficulty is that cases now occupying the spotlight go back several years, and have been argued back and forth for a long period. They are not new administrative problems, though this is not always clear to people outside of Washington. And, with the depth of feeling and emotional pitch that now prevails in Congress and without, there would seem to be no group that could command sufficient respect to be heeded on this matter except a "royal" commission.

Canada appointed one in 1946 at the time that Soviet spying in that country was disclosed by the confession of an employee of the Russian Embassy at Ottawa who sought sanctuary. Its report was a model of preparation, thorough investigation, and fair interrogation as compared to the way these things have been conducted in the United States. The writer has that report in his library as an example of the way such things should be handled.

So, if the rumors are true that General Eisenhower plans as President to appoint some sort of commission to review and report on the whole Communist question, lifting the issue out of the miasma of dispute, it would seem to be a most beneficial move.